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THE ROYAL ANCESTRY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS

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by Milton Rubincam*

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George Washington Parke Custis is chiefly remembered as the cultured master of Arlington, the adopted son and ardent admirer of President George Washington, and the father-in-law of General Robert E. Lee. In addition to these modest claims to distinction, however, Custis possessed unusual genealogical connections. The kinship of the Custises of Virginia to the noble Custis family of Belgium and the Netherlands has been discussed by this writer in previous articles.[1] But it is not generally realized that through his mother, Eleanor (Calvert) Custis, the whole panorama of European history is reflected in his direct ancestry. In his veins flowed the blood of the proudest ruling houses of a bygone era — Stuart, Tudor, Plantagenet, Bourbon, Valois, Guise, Medici, Sforza, Visconti, Savoy, Oldenburg, Hohenzollern, and Habsburg. Americans claiming royal descent generally have to go back to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries to find their last kingly forebear, but G. W. P. Custis was born less than a century after the death of his last progenitor to occupy a throne. The line of descent is as follows:

I. His Majesty, King Charles II, was born at St. James's Palace, May 29, 1630. After the execution of his father, Charles I, he was proclaimed in Scotland and in some parts of Ireland King of England, Scotland, France[2] and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. He was in exile, however, until the Restoration, being proclaimed King in Westminster Hall on May 8, 1660. He returned to London, May 29, 1660, and was crowned April 23, 1661. He died at Whitehall, February 6, 1684/5. By his wife, whom

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[1]Milton Rubincam, "The Noble Custis Family of the Netherlands and Belgium, Cadet Branch of England and Virginia," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, XXX (1942), 75-78; "Charles-François Custis, Belgian Historian: Scion of a Virginia Family," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LII (1944), 15-29.

[2]The meaningless claim to the French throne was first made in the reign of Edward III (1327-1377), and was discontinued in 1801 by King George III.

he married May 31, 1661, Catherine of Braganza (November 25, 1638-December 31, 1705), daughter of King John IV, of Portugal, and sister of Kings Alfonso VI and Pedro II,[3] he had no issue. He was a firm believer in large families, however, as his fifteen children by five mistresses amply demonstrate. From Charles II descend in the direct male line (through these irregular channels) the present Dukes of Buccleuch and Queensberry, Grafton, St. Albans, and Richmond and Lennox. The lady who shared with King Charles the honor of being a Custis forebear was Barbara (1641-October 9, 1709), daughter of William Villiers, 2nd Viscount Grandison, and wife of Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine. She was created Countess of Southampton and Duchess of Cleveland in 1670.

II. Charlotte Fitzroy, daughter of King Charles II and Lady Castlemaine, is said to have been born September 5, 1664. She died February 17, 1717/8. On February 6, 1676/7, she married Sir Edward Henry Lee, 5th Baronet, who, having been affianced to Charlotte before 1674, was created 1st Earl of Lichfield, June 5, 1674, at the advanced age of nine years. Lady Lichfield was noted for her beauty.

III. Lady Charlotte Lee, daughter of the above, was born March 13, 1678, and died January 21, 1721. On January 2, 1698/9, she married Benedict Leonard Calvert, 4th Lord Baltimore, who was born March 21, 1679, and died April 16, 1715. They were divorced in 1705. His Lordship's great-grandfather, Sir George Calvert (1578/9-1632), was knighted by King James I in 1617, became first Baron Baltimore, of Baltimore, county Longford, in the Peerage of Ireland, in 1621, and, being much interested in England's colonial enterprises, founded a small settlement, Avalon, in Newfoundland. His son, Cecilius, 2nd Baron Baltimore, received a charter for the Province of Maryland (1632), just after the death of his father, who was the real founder of the province. He married Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Arundell, 1st Lord Arundell of Wardour, who was descended, through his grandmother, from the illustrious House of Howard, Dukes of Norfolk. Their son, Charles, 3rd Lord Baltimore, Governor of Maryland from 1661 to 1675, succeeded his father in the latter year as proprietor of the province. He was a British major general. By his fourth wife, the widow Jane (Lowe) Sewell, he was the father of the 4th Baron, who married Lady Charlotte Lee.

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[3]On the occasion of King Pedro's marriage at Heidelberg (1687), the nuptial oration was delivered by Prof. Dr. Johannes Laurentius Crollius, whose great-great-grandnephew, Jacob Revercomb, was the founder of that Virginia family. (See Rubincam, "Origin of the Revercombs of Virginia," *VMHB*, LXIII [1955], 76-83.)

IV. Charles Calvert, 5th Lord Baltimore, son of the above, was born September 29, 1699, and died April 24, 1751. He married Mary Janssen and had a number of children, including Frederick (1732-1771), 6th and last Lord Baltimore, who had no issue by his wife, Lady Diana Egerton, but who fathered several illegitimate children; and Caroline, wife of Sir Robert Eden, 1st Baronet, of Maryland, Governor of the Province 1768-1776. From them descends, in the fifth generation, Sir Anthony Eden, K.G., the British Prime Minister.

V. Benedict Swingate, *illegitimate son of Charles, 5th Lord Baltimore,* by a woman whose identity was never disclosed,[4] was born *ca.* 1724, and assumed the name of Calvert. His paternity was acknowledged by the 5th Baron Baltimore. He was appointed Collector of Customs at Patuxent in 1744 and became a Member of the Provincial Council of Maryland in 1745. He died at his estate, "Mt. Airy," in Prince George's County, Maryland, January 9, 1788. On April 21, 1748, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Calvert, Governor of Maryland, who was presumably a son of Charles, 3rd Lord Baltimore. One of their children, George Calvert (1768-1838), married Rosalie Eugenia Stier, and had, among others, Caroline Maria, wife of Thomas Willing Morris, of Philadelphia; George Henry, poet and essayist, and Mayor of Newport, R. I.; and Charles Benedict Calvert, of Prince George's County, Maryland, founder of the first agricultural research college in America and Member of Congress, 1861-1863.

VI. Eleanor Calvert, daughter of the above, was born in 1754 and died September 28, 1811. She married (1) February 3, 1774, John Parke Custis, son of the late Colonel Daniel Parke Custis and his wife, Martha Dandridge, who since 1759 had been the wife of George Washington. John Parke Custis died in 1781, leaving a young widow with four children: Elizabeth Parke (1776-1832), married 1796, Thomas Law (1756-1834), son of Right Reverend Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle, and brother of Edward, 1st Baron Ellenborough; Martha Parke (1777-1854), married 1795, Thomas Peter; Eleanor Parke (1779-1852), married at Mt. Vernon, February 22, 1799, Lawrence Lewis, nephew of General George Washington, and had issue; and George Washington Parke (*see below*). Eleanor (Calvert) Custis married (2) 1783, Dr. David Stewart.

VII. George Washington Parke Custis, only son of John Parke and Eleanor (Calvert) Custis, was born April 30, 1781, and died October 10,

[4]An *unconfirmed* family tradition asserts that she was an illegitimate daughter of King George II, according to some, and George I, according to others.

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1857. He and his sister Eleanor (the famous "Nellie" Custis) were adopted by their step-grandfather, General Washington, and spent their youth at Mt. Vernon. As a young man, George W. P. Custis settled on the Arlington estate, which his father had purchased in 1778, and where he built the imposing structure called Arlington House, now known as Lee Mansion. In 1804 he married Mary Lee Fitzhugh.

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VIII. Mary Anne Randolph Custis was the only child of the above-named couple to survive infancy. She was born October 1, 1808, and died November 5, 1873. In 1831 she married Lieutenant Robert Edward Lee, United States Army, who was to achieve distinction thirty years later as the great Confederate general. They were the parents of seven children, of whom William Henry Fitzhugh Lee and Robert Edward Lee, Jr. married and had descendants.

In addition to the Calverts, Custises, Lewises, and Lees, there is another American family descended from King Charles II. The 4th Lord Baltimore and Lady Charlotte Lee, generation III, above, had a daughter, Jane Calvert, who married John Hyde, of Kingston Lisle, and had a daughter, Mary Calvert Hyde, who married George Mitchell, of Ireland. Their son, George Calvert Mitchell, settled at Royalton, N. Y., *ca.* 1810, and had descendants.

So much for the line of descent from King Charles II. In the following Table of Ancestors we consider the complete royal ancestry back to the sixteenth century.

1. Charles II, King of England and Scotland, etc.; *b.* May 29, 1630; reigned 1660-1685; *d.* February 6, 1684/5. Great-great-great-great-grandfather of George Washington Parke Custis.

Parents

2. Charles I, King of England and Scotland, etc.; *b.* Dunfermline, Scotland, November 19, 1600; crowned King, February 2, 1626; decapitated at Whitehall, January 30, 1648/9; buried at Windsor. Married May 11, 1626,
3. Henrietta Maria, Princess of France; *b.* November 25, 1609; *d.* August 31, ~~1666~~.[5] The Province of Maryland was named in Her Majesty's honor. 1669

[5]Since this article was written, the author has noticed that writers differ as to the year of Queen Henrietta Maria's death, some stating that it was in 1666, and others in 1669. Francis Sandford's *A Genealogical History of the Kings of England and Monarchs of Great Britain,* published in

Grandparents

4. James I, King of England (James VI of Scotland); *b.* Edinburgh Castle, June 19, 1566; succeeded his mother as King of Scotland, July 24, 1567; succeeded his cousin, Queen Elizabeth I, as King of England, March 24, 1602/3; *d.* at Theobald, Herts, March 27, 1625; buried at Westminster Abbey. Married November 24, 1589,
5. Anne, Princess of Denmark; *b.* December 12, 1574; *d.* March 2, 1618/19.
6. Henri IV, King of France and Navarre; *b.* December 14, 1553; assassinated May 14, 1610; succeeded his mother as King of Navarre, June 9, 1572, and his cousin, Henri III, as King of France, August 1, 1589. Married (1) August 18, 1574, Marguerite de Valois, sister of King Charles IX, of France, and (2) by proxy, October 5, and in person, December 27, 1600,
7. Marie de' Medici; *b.* at Florence, April 26, 1573; *d.* at Cologne, July 3, 1642.

Great-Grandparents

8. Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, Earl of Rosse, and Duke of Albany; *b.* at Temple Newsam, Yorks, England, December 7, 1545; murdered February 10, 1566/7. Married (as her second husband) at Holyrood Palace, July 29, 1565,
9. Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots; *b.* at Linlithgow, December 7 or 8, 1542; succeeded her father, December 14, 1542, aged 7 days; *m.* (1) April 24, 1558, Francis, Dauphin of France (afterwards King Francis II, *d.* December 5, 1560), (3) May 15, 1567, James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell; compelled to abdicate, July 24, 1567; beheaded at Fotheringay Castle, Northamptonshire, England, by order of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I, February 8, 1586/7.
10. Frederick II, King of Denmark and Norway; *b.* July 1, 1534; *d.* April 4, 1588. Married July 20, 1572,
11. Sophia of Mecklenburg; *b.* September 4, 1557; *d.* October 3, 1631.

1677, in the reign of her son, Charles II, declares (p. 554) that "she died on August 10, 1669." *The Encyclopedia Britannica,* 13th ed. (1926), XIII, 273, assigns the date August 31, 1666 (as given in the text of this article), and *The Encyclopedia Americana,* Victory Edition (1945), XIV, 98, gives August 31, 1669. Time has not permitted the author to reconcile these discrepancies.

[1664 is correct.
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12. Antoine de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme; *b.* April 22, 1518; *d.* November 17, 1562. King of Navarre in right of his wife, 1554. Married October 20, 1548,
13. Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre; *b.* January 7, 1528; *d.* June 9, 1572.
14. Francis I, Grand Duke of Tuscany; *b.* March 25, 1541; *d.* October 19, 1587. Married December 16, 1565,
15. Johanna, Archduchess of Austria; *b.* January 24, 1547; *d.* April 10, 1578.

Great-Great-Grandparents

16. Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox; *b.* September 21, 1516; *d.* September 4, 1571. Regent of Scotland, 1570. Married July 6, 1544,
17. Lady Margaret Douglas; *b.* October 8, 1515; *d.* March 9, 1577/8.
18. James V, King of Scots; *b.* April 10, 1512; succeeded 1513; crowned at Stirling, September 21, 1513; *d.* at Falkland, December 14, 1542; *m.* (1) January 1, 1536/7, Madeleine de Valois, daughter of Francis I, King of France. Married (2) May 9, 1538,
19. Marie de Lorraine; *b.* November 22, 1515; *d.* at Edinburgh Castle, June 10, 1560. Regent of Scotland during the minority of her daughter, Queen Mary. (Her first husband was Louis d'Orléans, duc de Longueville.)
20. Christian III, King of Denmark and Norway; *b.* August 12, 1503; *d.* January 1, 1559; succeeded 1534. Married October 29, 1525,
21. Dorothea of Saxe-Lauenburg; *b.* July 9, 1511; *d.* October 7, 1571.
22. Ulrich III, Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Güstrow; *b.* April 21, 1528; *d.* March 14, 1603. Married (1) February 16, 1556,
23. Elisabeth of Denmark; *b.* 1524; *d.* October 15, 1586.
24. Charles, Duke of Vendôme; *b.* June 2, 1489; *d.* March 25, 1537. Married May 18, 1513,
25. Françoise d'Alençon; *d.* September 14, 1550.
26. Henri (II) d'Albret, King of Navarre, duc d'Albret, Peer of France; *b.* April 18, 1503; *d.* May 29, 1555. Married (as her 2nd husband) January 24, 1527,

27. Margaret, Princess of France;[6] *b.* April 11, 1492; *d.* December 21, 1549; *m.* (1) December 12, 1509, Charles IV, Duke of Alençon.

28. Cosimo I, Grand Duke of Tuscany; *b.* June 11, 1519; *d.* April 21, 1574. Succeeded his cousin, Alessandro de' Medici, as Duke of Florence, 1537. First Grand Duke of Tuscany, 1569; crowned at Rome by Pope Pius V, 1570. Married (1) March 29, 1539,

29. Eleonora di Toledo; *b. ca.* 1522; *d.* December 18, 1562.

30. Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor, King of Hungary and Bohemia, etc.; *b.* March 10, 1503; *d.* July 25, 1564. Succeeded his brother-in-law, Louis II, as King of Hungary and Bohemia, 1526, and his brother, Charles V, as Emperor, 1558. Married May 25, 1521,

31. Anna of Hungary and Bohemia; *b.* July 23, 1503; *d.* January 27, 1547.

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[6]Princess Margaret (better known as Marguerite d'Angoulême), wife of King Henri d'Albret of Navarre, was sister of Francis I, King of France, and daughter of Charles, Count of Angoulême, by his wife, Louise, daughter of Philip II, Duke of Savoy. Philip was son of Louis, Duke of Savoy, and grandson of the widowed Amadeus VIII, Duke of Savoy, who abdicated in 1434, retired to a hermitage, and in 1439, although not in holy orders, was elected Pope as Felix V, in opposition to Eugenius IV. He renounced his claim to the pontificate in 1449, and was created a cardinal by his successful rival, Pope Nicholas V, successor of Eugenius IV. Thus, G. W. P. Custis was descended from the *legitimate* son of a pope (or at least an antipope)!